



Care Partner Information

Tips for Providing Older Adult Care

End of Life Care

As older adults approach the end of their life, it can be difficult for care partners to provide all of the care that is needed. Hospice can help.

What is hospice?

Hospice is special care for people who are in the last few months of life. Care is provided by healthcare providers with special training. They can provide care at the person's home. Or, they can give care at a hospice center. Hospice focuses on the whole person, including their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. The goal is to keep the person comfortable in the last months and weeks of their life. This helps a person to enjoy the remainder of their life, and also supports caregivers.

What Hospice Can Do	
Help plan and coordinate care.	Give care partners a break.
Make sure the patient is comfortable and pain free.	Answer questions about death and dying.
Provide emotional support for the family before their loved one dies.	Provide emotional support for the family - up to a year after their loved one has died.

When is it time for hospice?

A doctor can help decide if someone is at the end of their life, and ready for hospice. A person can choose hospice if they have been told by a doctor that they have six months or less to live. They do not have to be bed-bound to get help from hospice. It is better to start hospice care sooner, rather than later. It can improve comfort and pleasure for both patients and their families. Most insurance plans, including Medicare, will pay for hospice care. The older adult's doctor can give comfort care along with the hospice staff.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at www.aging.arizona.edu

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When is hospice not a good choice?

Hospice is not for patients who want to continue treatments that aim to cure the disease, such as chemotherapy. In that case, palliative care may be better. Palliative care can help support seriously ill patients and their families at any stage of illness.

Important Conversations

Talking about the end of life can be hard, but it can bring peace of mind and reduce stress. In some cultures, people think talking about death will invite it sooner. But these talks make it possible for the person to have the kind of care they want, where they want, and have any special wishes granted.

Topics for Important Conversations	
Who do they want with them at the end of life?	What are they willing to go through for more time?
What type of care do they want and not want?	Do they want to donate their organs?
Where do they want to live and to die?	What are the person's funeral preferences?

Legal Documents Everyone Should Have

Everyone should have a few important documents (paperwork). These documents help caregivers when the older adult can no longer make decisions. Documents are different in each state. It is important to make sure the older adult's documents are legal in their current state of residence.

Type of Document	What It Does
Power of Attorney	Names one person to manage the personal affairs and money when the older adult cannot.
Medical Power of Attorney	Names one person to make medical decisions when the older adult cannot. An alternate person can be added.
Mental Health Power of Attorney	Names one person to make mental health decisions for the older adult when they cannot. An alternate person can be added.
Advance Directives/Living Will	Details what kind of medical care the older adult wants, such as whether they want CPR.
Will	States what the older adult wants done with their money and belongings after they die.

Useful Websites

Hospice Foundation of America: <http://hospicefoundation.org/>

National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/end-of-life>

Health in Aging Foundation: <http://www.healthinaging.org/resources/resource:guide-to-advance-directives-1/>

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